

Testimony of Andy Shaw
In Opposition to Senate Bills 114 and 258
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
April 3, 2017



Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee:

As you know, Metro is the regional government of the Portland metropolitan area. We provide a broad range of public services including land use and transportation planning, solid waste and recycling operations, management of parks and natural areas, and operation of major visitor facilities like the Oregon Convention Center and the Oregon Zoo.

The Metro Council's directs Metro's legislative efforts in part through a set of principles adopted prior to each session. One of those principles reads: "Cities are the preferred governing structure for providing public services to urban areas, and Metro supports reforms that will facilitate, or reduce barriers to, orderly annexation and incorporation."

SB 114 and SB 258 directly violate this principle. These identical bills would repeal legislation passed just last year that, in certain very limited circumstances, overrode local requirements to put annexation decisions to a public vote. While the concerns that drive these local requirements are genuinely felt, voting on annexations is the wrong solution.

State law requires Metro to provide a 20-year supply of land within our urban growth boundary and to replenish that supply, as needed, every six years. Metro may not expand the UGB until and unless we use the land inside the UGB efficiently and effectively. Voting on annexation creates an unnecessary barrier to the orderly urbanization of land that has already been determined through the open public process of UGB management to be appropriate for urbanization and frustrates the ability to thoughtfully manage future population growth.

Moreover, Metro has recently adopted ordinances providing that land will not be added to the UGB in the future unless a city has agreed to provide urban services to the area added to the boundary. It would be the height of folly for the voters of those cities to then turn around and refuse to provide those services after the land is brought into the boundary. Even when annexations are approved by the voters, the practical effect of requiring a public vote is often less efficient development than might otherwise occur in a given area, in response to anti-growth voter sentiment.

In a larger sense, voting on annexation is inconsistent with Oregon's land use planning program. It breaks the fundamental agreement that underlies land use planning: that while we protect farm and forest land by limiting growth outside UGBs, we provide certainty about the ability to develop inside UGBs.

Finally, voter rejection of annexation, or less dense development that is driven by the need for voter approval, simply leads to the need to expand UGBs sooner and more extensively onto farm and forest lands outside the boundary.

For these reasons, the Metro Council opposes SB 114 and SB 258. We urge you not to move them forward.